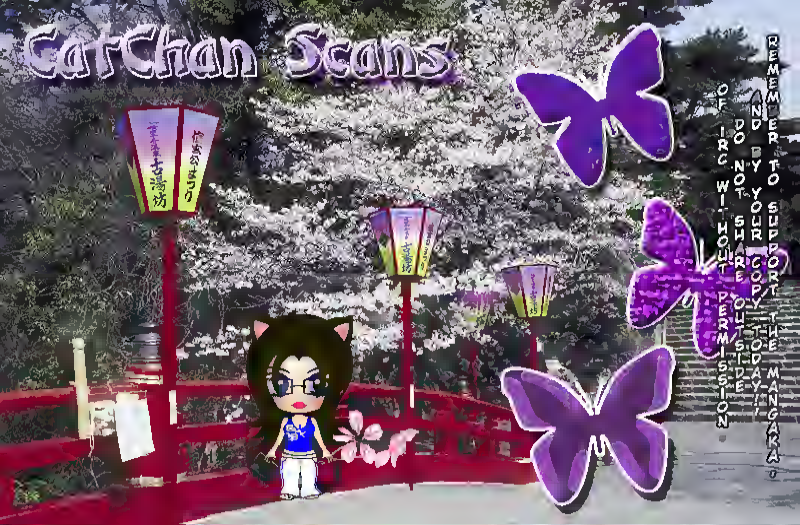
CatChan Scans
REMEMBER TO SUPPORT THE MANGAKA
AND BUY YOUR COPY OF THE GOD DAMN
DO NOT SHARE OUTSIDE OF IRC WITHOUT PERMISSION

crossroad

Story & Art by

SHIOKO MIZUKI

7

crossroad

7

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crossroad

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SHIOKO MIZUKI

Volume 7

go!comi

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crossroad

The Story So Far...

Kajitsu, Taro, Natsu, and Satsuki are four siblings not tied by blood, but living together with their step-mother, Rumiko, under one roof.

Thanks to Natsu and Erika's relationship, Kajitsu has had to once again face facts, and recognize her true feelings for Natsu. Meanwhile, Natsu, having gone out with Erika to appease her feelings, dissolves their relationship and confesses his true feelings to Kajitsu. Now the only problem left is their big brother Taro...

Cast of Characters

Taro Toda
The eldest son in the Toda household and self-proclaimed boss. His motto is "No Incest in the House."

Erica
A classmate of Natsu, who's taking steps to make him her man. She has many female enemies.

Akai-sensei
The calligraphy teacher at Kajitsu's school. Will his alluring scent trap Kajitsu, too?

Natsu
Kajitsu's younger step-brother, of the same age. He's the valedictorian at school for which he gets a lot of unwanted attention.

Kajitsu Toda
A 16-year-old girl who is worried about her naturally gloomy attitude and is striving to make a change in herself.

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Concerning Honorifics

At Go! Comi, we do our best to ensure that our translations read seamlessly in English while respecting the original Japanese language and culture. To this end, the original honorifics (the suffixes found at the end of characters' names) remain intact. In Japan, where politeness and formality are more integrated into every aspect of the language, honorifics give a better understanding of character relationships. They can be used to indicate both respect and affection. Whether a person addresses someone by first name or last name also indicates how close their relationship is.

Here are some of the honorifics you might encounter in reading this book.

-san: This is the most common and neutral of honorifics. The polite way to address someone you're not on close terms with is to use "-san." It's kind of like Mr. or Ms., except you can use "-san" with first names as easily as family names.

-chan: Used for friendly familiarity, mostly applied towards young girls. "-chan" also carries a connotation of cuteness with it, so it is frequently used with nicknames towards both boys and girls (such as "Na-chan" for "Natsu").

-kun: Like "-chan," it's an informal suffix for friends and classmates, only "-kun" is usually associated with boys. It can also be used in a professional environment by someone addressing a subordinate.

-sama: Indicates a great deal of respect or admiration.

Sempai: In school, "sempai" is used to refer to an upperclassman or club leader. It can also be used in the workplace by a new employee to address a mentor or staff member with seniority.

Sensei: Teachers, doctors, writers or any master of a trade are referred to as "sensei." When addressing a manga creator, the polite thing to do is attach "-sensei" to the manga-ka's name (as in Mizuki-sensei).

Onii: This is the more casual term for an older brother. Usually you'll see it with an honorific attached, such as "onii-chan."

Onee: The casual term for older sister, it's used like "onii" with honorifics.

[blank]: Not using an honorific when addressing someone indicates that the speaker has permission to speak intimately with the other person. This relationship is usually reserved for close friends and family.

#31 Remnants of a Dream

crossroad Chapter 31: Remnants of a Dream

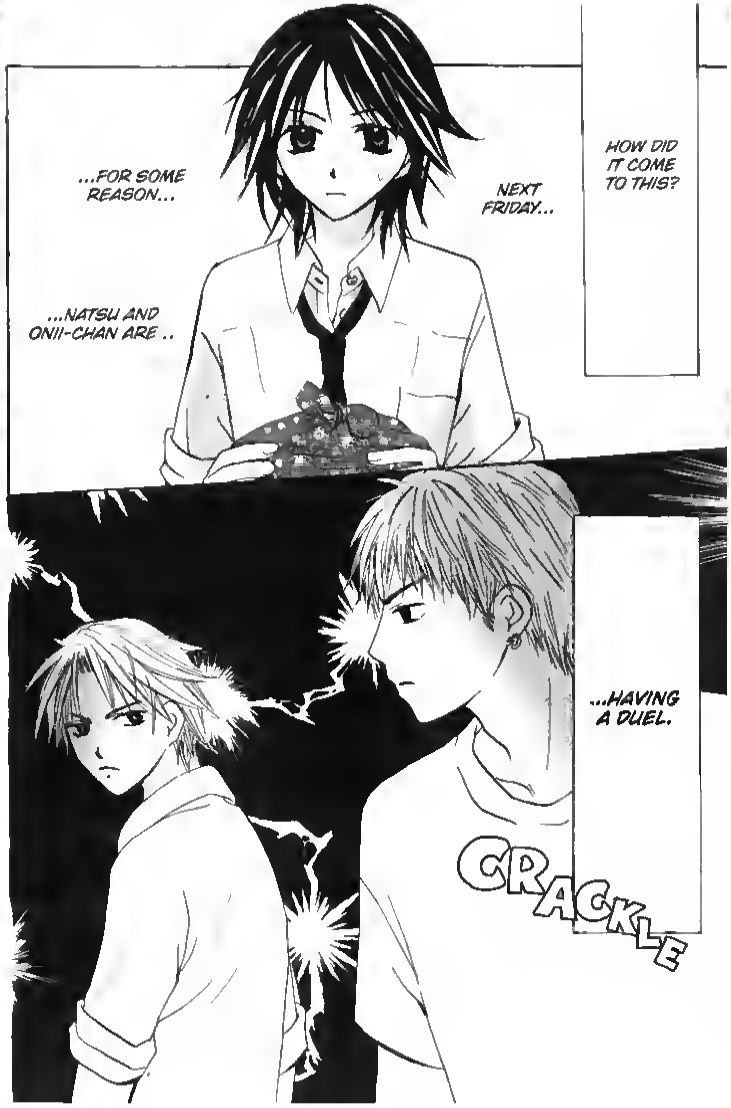
*See translator's notes

Lately I've been seeing a new Japanese celebrity on television and magazines named 'Erica'. And before I knew it, there was another one named 'Kaitsu'!

Actually her name isn't 'Kaitsu.' It's 'Kasane-chan'* but I was still happy when she debuted last year. It makes me happy just thinking how they have the same kanji in their names.

It would be perfect if the next girl I found was a 'Natsuki-chan' (Ha ha) I bet. It'd be nice, too, if there were a 'Machuru' or a 'Nene.' But, I doubt there are any

Actually isn't there also another young woman named 'Erica Toda'? Awesome!



HMPH!
YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A BABY!
QUIT BEING MEAN TO KAJITSU.
KNOCK IT OFF.
GAAAAH!
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY TO ME!?
I DON'T KNOW IF MY STOMACH CAN HOLD OUT UNTIL FRIDAY!
IT'S BEEN LIKE THIS FOR DAYS!
There, there.
I'm so scared! It hurts so much!
YEEEEEK!
GRUMBLE
IT'S SO STRANGE.
IN THE PAST, I'VE NEVER FELT BITTER TOWARD TARO.
BUT NOW... EVERY LITTLE THING HE DOES IRRITATES ME.
DON'T SAY SOMETHING SO SCARY WITH SUCH A STRAIGHT FACE!!
I...
...KNOW I HAVE TO FIGHT HIM, PRETENDING HE KILLED MY MOTHER AND IS MY SWORN ENEMY!!

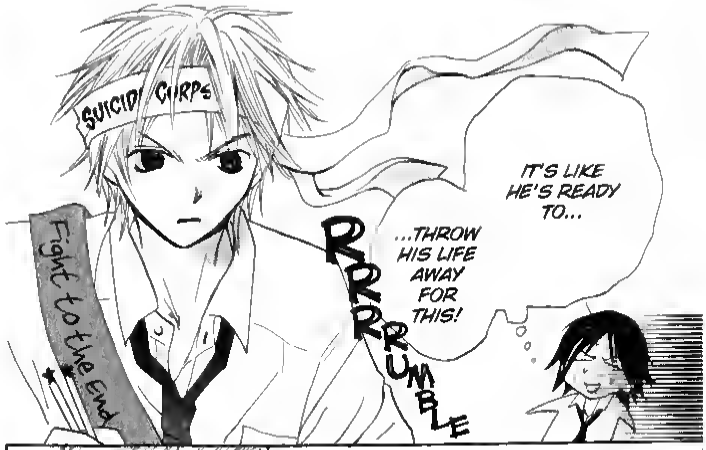
IT'S BECAUSE WE'RE IN LOVE.
LOOK AT THAT! IT'S THE TODA SIBLINGS!
BOY, ARE THEY CLOSE
YOU TWO HIDING TO HAVE LUNCH TOGETHER?
We're just passing through
Talk about suspicious.
IT'S UH, TAKING A WHILE.
Hmm...
Ignore
IT'S JUST, LIKE, AN EXTENDED FAMILY DISCUSSION!
ER, UH.. DON'T LISTEN TO HIM! I-I-IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK!
...I THINK IT'S MORE THAN THAT.
EARLIER, I SAID HE'D CHANGED, BUT..
I didn't expect that.
Yeah.

THAT'S IT!
I KNEW THIS DUEL WAS A BAD IDEA!!
TOMORROW, I'LL APOLOGIZE.
WE'LL GO APOLOGIZE TOGETHER!
APOLOGIZE FOR WHAT?
W-WELL... I DON'T KNOW!
MAYBE FOR WHAT'S BOTHERING TARO!
Peaceful resolution, peaceful resolution
TARO'S BOTHERED BECAUSE I LOVE YOU, KAJITSU.
NOTHING CAN MAKE ME APOLOGIZE FOR THAT.
BESIDES, SINCE TARO WAS RUDE TO MY PRECIOUS KAJITSU..
...THERE'S NO WAY HE'S GETTING OUT OF THIS IN ONE PIECE.
NATSU'S GOTTEN SO WILD...
MUNCH MUNCH

I'LL EVEN BE YOUR EYE-WITNESS!
WHAT DO YOU SAY!?
WE WON'T BE ANY TROUBLE!
SEE, MY FAMILY REPAIRS ROOF TILES!
YOU MIND IF I DO A LITTLE BUSINESS THERE?
WILL PEOPLE BE WATCHING?

FRIDAY FINALLY CAME
Tues
Wed
Thurs

Friday.
FLAP
PLOP
FLAP


SUICIDE CORPS
Fight to the End
RRRRUMBLE
...THROW HIS LIFE AWAY FOR THIS!
IT'S LIKE HE'S READY TO...

YOU CAN'T STOP ME!
DON'T SAY ANY-THING!
.. ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO FIGHT TARO?
MANO-CHAN TOLD ME ABOUT IT, BUT...
NATSU-KUN
ER I WASN'T GONNA TRY.

BULGE
BULGE
Macho-man
Prince
Twinkle
Twinkle
BUT...
GLANCE
PLEASE, NOTHING SO BAD THAT THEY CAN'T RECOVER!
OH, WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN?
UH, EXCUSE ME? I HAVE A SUGGESTION.
EVEN I CAN SEE THAT NATSU DOESN'T HAVE A CHANCE OF WINNING.
WHAT KIND OF MAN CHALLENGES ANOTHER TO ARITHMETIC!?
LET'S CHANGE THE RULES! INSTEAD OF FIGHTING...
...HOW ABOUT WE HAVE A MATH CHALLENGE OF ONE HUNDRED PROBLEMS?

garden.
YOU KNOW I LIVE RIGHT NEAR BY.
IT'S CLOSE ENOUGH TO WALK
OH, YEAH
ALL RIGHT!
HERE ALREADY, HUH?
YOU'RE EARLIER THAN I THOUGHT.
POPSICLES! GET YER POPSICLES HERE!
Peddler
Spectators
WHY ARE THOSE TWO HERE?
Did Tachibana-kun bring them?
YEAH! THAT'S WHAT I WANNA SEE! SPLOOSHING ALL OVER THE PLACE!
I WONDER IF WE'LL GET TO SEE BLOOD

THE SPECTATORS CAN'T WAIT MUCH LONGER!
DO IT! BLOOD WILL HAVE BLOOD!
ONII-CHAN?
THRUM
LET THE MATCH BEGIN!
YOU REALLY MEAN IT?
WELL, IN THAT CASE ..
YES.
...ARE YOU SERIOUS?
YOU'RE WILLING TO BEAT ME UP TO BE WITH KAJITSU?
YES!
POW
EEK!! IT'S STARTED!!
WAIT! ONII-CHAN WAS ABOUT TO SAY SOMETHI--

...YOU LET ME MARRY KAJITSU!
IF I WIN...
THE RULES ARE SIMPLE!
WE FIGHT UNTIL ONE OF US CAN'T FIGHT ANYMORE.
WHEN DID MARRIAGE COME INTO THIS!?
I DON'T KNOW! I DON'T KNOW! I'VE NEVER HEARD THAT BEFORE!
IT WAS MY DECISION NOT TO DISCUSS URGENT MATTERS.
THAT WAS A BAD DECISION!
SOB

AH...!
POW
GRIP
COLLAPSE
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? ARE YOU TRYING TO KILL HIM!?
I WON'T DO IT AGAIN.
HE CAN'T EVEN STAND UP.
Wheeze
Wheeze

I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY, TARO!
Ow!
BAM
KAJITSU IS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN YOU! I NEED HER! IF YOU CAN'T ACCEPT IT, I'LL RUN AWAY WITH HER!
POW
...IF YOU CAN'T FORGIVE US, THEN JUST BLAME ME! CUT ME OUT OF YOUR LIFE!
BUT I WON'T LET YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON KAJITSU!
WE'LL LEAVE YOU AND GO LIVE ON OUR OWN!
BUT, I KNOW THAT WOULD UPSET KAJITSU, SO...

SPLASH
I'M SICK AND TIRED OF YOU GOING ON ABOUT "KAJITSU THIS" AND "KAJITSU THAT"
IT'S NOT JUST "KAJITSU," GET IT?
SHE'S STILL MY FAMILY.
AND SO ARE YOU
MY CUTE LITTLE BROTHER, REMEMBER?
GO COOL DOWN.

HE'LL DIE!
Get yer popcorn!
YEAH! TARO'S IN GREAT SHAPE FROM CARRYING HEAVY BOXES AROUND AT WORK, ALL DAY.
YUP
NO CONTEST.
SO...
...THIS WASN'T MUCH OF A CHALLENGE, HUH?
BRING SOME WATER. NOW!
IN A BUCKET!
..HUH?
WHEEZE
WHEEZE
W-WAIT A MINUTE!
GET SOME WATER!
IT'S OVER FOR ME
YOU DIDN'T WIN!
IT'S NOT OVER, YET!

YOU'RE NOT EVEN RELATED BY BLOOD
CRUNCH
OF COURSE.
WHY SHOULD I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH IT?
HUH?
WAIT A SECOND!
YOU HAVE MY FULL BLESSING!
THINK ABOUT IT.
WHY WOULD I WANT SOME STRANGER COMING INTO THE HOUSE...
...WHEN YOU MARRYING KAJITSU WILL KEEP THE FAMILY AS IT IS.
AND WHAT ABOUT THIS, HUH?
WHAT ABOUT YOUR LITTLE "SLOGAN"?
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAID I BETTER NOT LAY A FINGER ON KAJITSU!
AND NOW YOU SUDDENLY CHANGE YOUR MIND?
Slogan
No Incest In the House

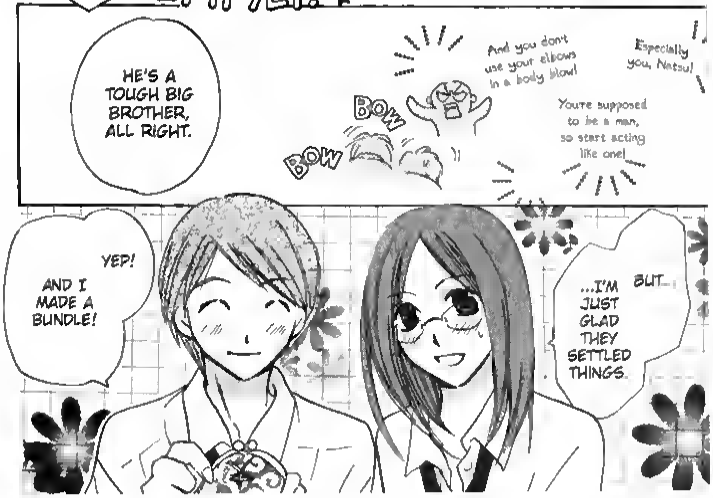
RUFFLE
RUFFLE
I WANT YOU BOTH TO BE HAPPY.
HOW COULD YOU TELL ME...
...TO CUT YOU OFF, HUH? DON'T YOU GET IT?
I'M NOT SOME MEAN BIG BROTHER...
...WHO WANTS TO MAKE...
...EITHER OF YOU MISERABLE.
HUH? THEN...
...YOU MEAN IT'S OKAY?
ABOUT ME AND KAJITSU?

YOU MEAN THE BIG BROTHER? HE'S PRETTY TOUGH
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT GUY?
YOU IDIOT!
THAT'S WHAT A REAL MAN IS LIKE.
HE'S SO FRICKIN' COOL!
WHAT?
strut
strut
strut

MY NAME?
IT'S TARO TODA.
HEY!
YOU MIND IF I ASK YOUR NAME?

AND YOU TWO SHOULD HAVE COME TO ME RIGHT UP FRONT.
I'M SAYING IT'S ALL RIGHT IF YOU'RE SERIOUS!
INSTEAD, YOU SNUCK AROUND BEHIND MY BACK!
OF COURSE YOUR BIG BROTHER WOULD BE MAD AT THAT!
GNASH
GNASH
GET IT YET?

DO YOU THINK I..
YOU REALLY THINK I..
I'D NEVER LET YOU JUST FOOL AROUND
IT STILL STANDS!
..AM THAT SHALLOW!?
Sure I get carried away easily, but...
WELL, YOU'RE BOTH YOUNG!


HE'S A TOUGH BIG BROTHER, ALL RIGHT.
And you don't use your elbows in a body blow!
Especially you, Natsu!
You're supposed to be a man, so start acting like one!
BOW
BOW
YEP! AND I MADE A BUNDLE!
BUT...
...I'M JUST GLAD THEY SETTLED THINGS.

I GUESS...
GET AWAY FROM HIM!
OH, WELL.
...IT ALL TURNED OUT FOR THE BEST.
AND THAT'S HOW...
...JUST AS SUMMER WAS ENDING...
Hey! Don't leave me here with her!
HEY!
OF COURSE NOT!
SOMEBODY DO SOMETHING WITH HER!
completely dumbfounded

WHAT!? YOU'RE FREAKING ME OUT!
TARO-SAN!
ARE YOU MESSING WITH ME?
I WANT TO...
...FOLLOW YOU!
IS THAT ALL RIGHT?
.. BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU ALL MY LIFE!
I HAVE THE FEELING I'VE...
WHAT?
HAYAMI-SAN! GET A GRIP!
Though I do understand how you feel.
FROTH
FROTH
FROTH

MY FIRST STEP INTO THE LITERARY WORLD!
WHAT DO I DO? THIS IS ALL TOO FAST!
WHA. .
THEN, IN ALMOST NO TIME...
THADUMP
THADUMP
THADUMP
THADUMP
...IT MIGHT CREATE QUITE A STIR.
I MEAN IF IT DOES COME OUT...
Contemporary Literature
Announcing the Winners of the New Writers Contest
...IS OPEN THE DOOR TO MY DREAMS!
FLIP
WELL, ALL I CAN DO...

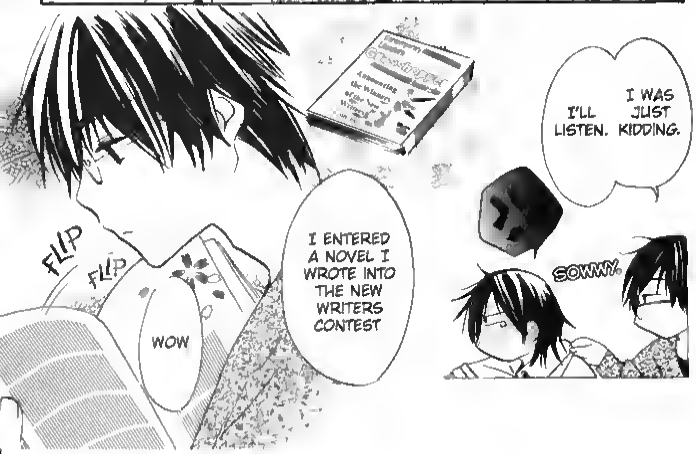
...AND HOPE IT WINS THE PRIZE.
NOW ALL I HAVE TO DO IS MAIL IT OFF...
FINISHED!!
...WE MANAGED TO FIND..
...A LITTLE BIT OF PEACE AND QUIET.
BLUE ,
I...
WROTE A NOVEL...
MY VERY FIRST ONE
CLUNK

DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
...TO KEEP MY CHIN UP AFTER BEING TOLD I'M NO GOOD RIGHT TO MY FACE!
AND I'M DEFINITELY NOT STRONG ENOUGH...
I KNOW I'M NO GENIUS!
I DID MY BEST!
YES?
WAAAAH!
STUPID SENSE!!!

MONGOOSE*
マングース
...HAVE ANY INTEREST IN DOING THIS SERIOUSLY?
TODA-SAN DON'T YOU..
KANTOU TODA
*See translator's notes
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH
HOW COULD YOU WRITE SUCH CRAP WITH THE BRUSH I GAVE YOU?
YOU GET AN "F."*
*See translator's notes
CONCENTRATE ON YOUR WORK WITH A GOOD TOOL!
ONE, YOU NEED A BRUSH. TWO, YOU NEED A BRUSH. SKIP THREE AND FOUR. FIVE, YOU NEED TALENT.
LOOK, YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO WRITE ALL THESE X'S ON IT
AFTER ALL, I..
BRUSHES ARE IMPORTANT!
THIS BRUSH SENSEI GAVE ME IS GREAT!

PROMISE YOU WON'T LAUGH...
SEN-SEI
YOU WANNA GO WITH ME?
SURE IS NICE WEATHER TODAY. BOY, I'D LOVE TO LEAVE SCHOOL EARLY.
HM?
...IF I TELL YOU SOME-THING?

I HAVEN'T EVEN SAID ANYTHING YET!
Aha ha ha ha ha!
THAT WAS HILARIOUS!

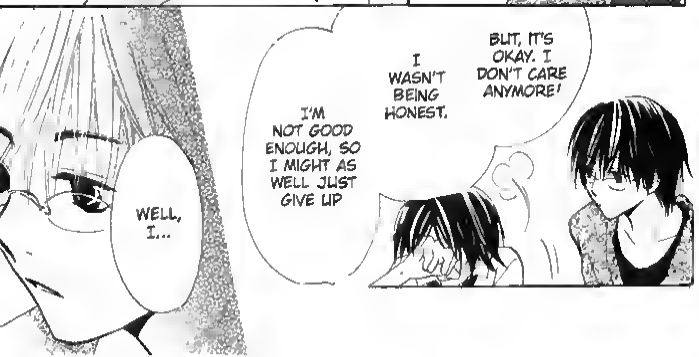

FLIP
FLIP
WOW
I ENTERED A NOVEL I WROTE INTO THE NEW WRITERS CONTEST
I'LL LISTEN.
I WAS JUST KIDDING.
SOWWY.

THEY HAVE NO IDEA HOW HARD I TRY!
CHOOSE YOUR WORDS MORE CAREFULLY! BE MORE DELICATE!
WE'VE BEEN MEANING TO SAY THIS, BUT YOU'RE REALLY HARSH ON TODA.
RATTLE
MOAN
ALL RIGHT ALREADY
YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND A WOMAN'S HEART, DO YOU?
NOW, GO AFTER HER!

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THE HECK SHE'S TALKING ABOUT!
SHE STARTED CRYING ON HER OWN
YOU MADE HER CRY!!

TODA-SAN.

DOOR TO MY DREAMS?
I KNOW IT, NOW THAT I'VE TRIED.
THE DOOR TO ONE'S DREAMS DOESN'T OPEN FOR JUST ANYONE.
RUB RUB
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING, SENSE!
DID YOU JUST REALIZE THAT NOW?
SENSEI, YOU'RE SO HARSH! I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU, YOU DEMON!
THE DOOR TO YOUR DREAMS IS ALREADY OPEN FOR YOU!


WELL, I...
I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH, SO I MIGHT AS WELL JUST GIVE UP
I WASN'T BEING HONEST.
BUT, IT'S OKAY. I DON'T CARE ANYMORE!

DO YOU WANT TO BE A WRITER, TODA-SAN?
SENSEI!!
I DON'T HAVE A REAL PLAN. BUT, MY HOBBY HAS ALWAYS BEEN WRITING.
WELL ..I HAVEN'T THOUGHT THAT FAR AHEAD
I GUESS I THINK IT'D BE NICE IF I COULD BE ONE.

WHAT A WASTE OF TIME.
THINK ABOUT THE POOR SUCKERS WHO'LL HAVE TO READ YOUR TRASH.
THEN, IT'LL BE IMPOSSIBLE.
DROP DROP

I DIDN'T EVEN GET MY NAME IN THE BOOK!
BUT IT'S NO GOOD! COMPLETE FAILURE!
OOH
I HAVE ZERO TALENT! NO CHANCE AT ALL!
HMMM.

TRY ASKING YOUR TEARS.
...I CAN'T STOP CRYING.
WIPE
I'M SO HUMILI-ATED...
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN? WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?
Go right ahead.
memo
memo
memo
Memo
MIND IF I BORROW THAT PHRASE?
...TO PUSH ME FORWARD?
ARE THESE TEARS FALLING...

...THAT MAGNIFICENT DOOR.
...HAVE NEVER ONCE SEEN...
ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO IT?
ARE YOU AFRAID?
WILL YOU GIVE UP OR CONTINUE?
I CAN'T ANSWER THAT FOR YOU.
SO, I SHOULD KEEP TRYING?
RUB
RUB
YOU MEAN YOU DON'T HAVE A DOOR, EITHER?
THAT'S WHERE YOU ALWAYS GET LOST.

Bye-bye, sensei.
We're done cleaning up
We're headed home now.
Okay
Yay!
Yay!
STARE
Yay!
Yay!
SEE YOU TOMORROW
TOMA-SENSEI, YOU'RE LATE!
WE'RE ALREADY GOING HOME
SENSEI?
ER, NOTHING.
WHAT?
What should we eat?
See, I'm on a diet
HEY, HAVE YOU...
...TOLD HER ANYTHING YET?
YOU'RE GOING TO LEAVE WITHOUT TELLING HER?

SURE! GO AHEAD!
WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, WRITE THIS DOWN
I BETTER WRITE THAT DOWN, TOO.
SNIFFLE
MEMO MEMO
"I LOVE YOU."
I LOVE YOU.
SOME-DAY.
IT'S OKAY JUST WRITE IT DOWN
Would you please quit saying things like that?
W-WAIT A SEC!
YOU IDIOT!!
HA HA HA!
RIP
...IT MAY BE IMPORTANT TO YOU.

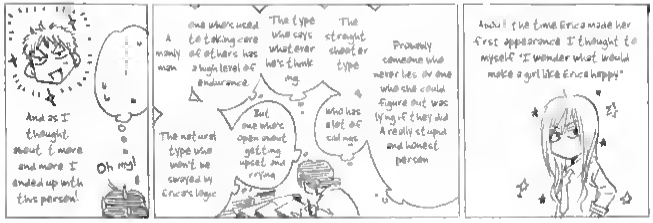
*They are speaking in a Chinese dialect
Bump
(I THOUGHT YOU'D BE COMING SOONER.)*
我已为 你会早来这的
(NOT MY FAULT I HAD TO WAIT FOR SOME-ONE.)
不知道 我也是被等的
CHA HA HA... IS THAT SO?)
哈哈哈…是吗？
RUMMAGE
Fragile
Home
THUD
(NOW THAT YOU'VE BROKEN UP WITH THE GIRL, YOU TOLD ME YOU HAD NOTHING LEFT IN JAPAN.)
不是说 女朋友分手了 日本也没什么了
(WHEN DID I EVER SAY THAT?)
那是什么 时候说的
(ABOUT SIX MONTHS AGO.)
半年前？
(CANYWAY, YOUR FAMILY MISSES YOU, TOO.)
总而言之 我家人想见称
(YOU TOOK CARE OF ME IN JAPAN, SO...)
在这里的生活 就抱在我身上
(ALLOW ME TO HANDLE THINGS HERE IN CHINA.)
我在日本时一直 麻烦你了
(I'LL DO THAT.)
嗯 那就麻烦你了
(THIS IS IT.)
就这样了
(YOU WANT TO COME TO CHINA AS SOON AS YOU CAN, RIGHT AKAI?)
赤井 你也想早来中国吧！
ZZZIP

(DID YOU FIND SOMETHING IN THOSE SIX MONTHS?)
那么 半年之间 又我到了什么？
You're so dirty, dirty, dirty.
I hate these love-hotel toothbrushes!!

#32 "Missing"

...YOU'LL BE LEAVING JAPAN NEXT MONTH.
I Love you.
SINCE YOU'VE DECIDED TO STUDY ABROAD...

YOU CAN READ ONE THOUSAND CHARACTERS QUICKLY, SO...
MY NOVEL.
FLOP
READ IT.
SLAM
RATTLE
RATTLE
WHAT'S THIS?


And as I thought about it more and more I ended up with this person!
Oh my!
A manly man
One who's used to taking care of others has a high level of endurance.
The not-wet type who won't be swayed by emotional logic
The type who says what's on their mind, we're thinking.
But one who's open about getting upset and crying
The straight shooter type
Who has a lot of courage
Probably someone who never lies or one who she could figure out was lying if they did. A really stupid and honest person
Aww! The time Erica made her first appearance I thought to myself "I wonder what would make a girl like Erica happy"

那么
(I DUNNO)
设怎么办呢
(MAYBE I DID.)
CHK.
#32 Missing

OKAY, REALLY? BUT JUST MAKE SURE YOU'RE EATING WELL
DON'T WORRY, I WON'T BE SKIPPING LUNCHES, STARTING NEXT WEEK.
HUH?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE BOXED LUNCHES FOR ME ANYMORE
..IT'S ALL RIGHT.
BUT...
GYOZA EVERYDAY FOR LUNCH? THAT'S RIDICULOUS!
Ha ha ha
MAYBE I'LL TRY SOME GYOZA
YUP, EVERY-DAY
IT'S NOT EXACTLY A RESTAURANT
HMM...
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE THEM YOURSELF
I WOULDN'T MIND TREATING YOU TO SOME, TOO.
THEY'RE REALLY DELI-CIOUS.
REALLY? WHERE? WHAT RESTAU-RANT?

I'LL TELL HIM I WON THE NEXT AWARD IF I DO, BUT UNTIL THEN, IT'S TOO HUMILIATING!
I CAN'T DO THAT! IT'S TOO EMBAR-RASSING!
AGAIN?
MAKE YOUR BELOVED LITTLE BROTHER READ IT.
BEERGH! SO BITTER!
GO BACK TO THE COUNTRY!
WHAT A TOTAL DRAG TO HAVE TO READ IT.
TALK ABOUT NAÏVE!
THAT IS, LIKE, TOTALLY BORING!*
NO WAY! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
BUT THAT'S JUST WHAT I NEEDED NOW!
Toss

*See translator's notes

...I GUESS THIS IS PAYBACK FOR THEM
ANY-WAY...
SEEING AS I'VE BEEN...
...ENJOYING YOUR HOMEMADE BOX-LUNCHES SO MUCH THESE DAYS...
QUIT PSYCHING YOURSELF OUT!
ONCE I CAN HANDLE YOUR CRITICISM, I WON'T BE AFRAID NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS!
CHARGE!
ALL RIGHT! I SURRENDER!

BUMP
WHOA!
HUH? OH!
SORRY!
SENSEI?
SENSEI SURE WAS ACTING STRANGE TODAY.
MAYBE IT'S JUST MY IMAGI-NATION.
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK

TODA-SAN
IF YOU COME BACK?
SOMEDAY...
...IF I EVER COME BACK, I'LL BRING YOU SOME.
GOOD LUCK...
...WITH YOUR NOVELS.

I DON'T KNOW.
ARE YOU GOING TO GO SEE HIM OFF NEXT WEEK?
I DIDN'T KNOW..
..ABOUT THIS
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WHAT'S UP WITH THAT?
HE SAID HE WON'T HAVE ANYWHERE TO KEEP THEM, SO HE DOESN'T NEED THEM ANYMORE
YESTERDAY, HE SUDDENLY GAVE ME A WHOLE PILE OF HIS CDS!
GUESS IT MEANS HE WON'T BE COMING BACK HOME, HUH?
ARE YOU SAYING..
..SENSEI'S GOING TO CHINA?
UH-OH! HE'S GONNA KILL ME! YUUJI-SAN'S DEFINITELY GONNA KILL ME!
UH..
In 25 years, they'll find my bones in the mountains.

YES, I EMEMBERED.
PAT
PAT
PAT
I'M SO HAPPY, TODA! ♡
YOU REMEMBERED MY NAME? ♡
OH.
TSUSHIMA-KUN?
SORRY, DID I HURT YOU?
AHA! I KNEW IT!
NO, I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING.
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT YUUJI-SAN, RIGHT?
HUH?
TOTALLY! I WAS SHOCKED, TOO!
HE NEVER TAKES THINGS SLOWLY. HE SAID HE'S FINALLY DECIDED TO STUDY ABROAD!

DON'T TRY...
...STOPPING HIM.
...THINGS ARE ALREADY SETTLED OVER THERE, AND HE'S GOT A PLANE TICKET.
HE'LL BE FLYING OUT NEXT WEEK.
EVEN IF I TRIED...
I...
...HE'D STILL GO.
YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT THAT.
PROBABLY
SO, NUMBER ONE-CHAN.
NEXT WEEK...
...HE WON'T BE HERE ANYMORE?
HE'S STILL IN A PANIC HAVING DECIDED SO ABRUPTLY, BUT...
YUP
THAT'S RIGHT.

I'M SO CONFUSED.
I CAN'T KEEP QUIET ABOUT IT.
GAH, WHAT DO I DO?
IF HE REALLY MEANT TO LEAVE WITHOUT SAYING ANY-THING...
I'll never forgive him!
BEEP BEEP BEEP
Address Akai-sensei
Subject Sensei is an
Attachment
idiot!
SEND!
Sending Message
SENSEI...
IT'S NO GOOD
I CAN'T SLEEP!
GRUMPH
Zzz...
AH, THAT FEELS BETTER.
heh heh heh
NOW TO SLEEP!
FLOP
BRRRR
HM?

...DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY?
I DON'T UNDER-STAND
WHAT...
IT WAS NO BIG DEAL TELLING ME OR TOMA-SAN, BUT...
MAYBE BECAUSE IT WAS TOO HARD TO SAY?
WHY DIDN'T HE TELL ME?
...WITH YOU, HE...
...TO SAY?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

I NEED TO SEE HIS FACE.
...I'M SURE I'LL...
...FEEL SO MUCH BETTER.
IF I JUST SEE HIS FACE...

Re: Idiot
Send
BEEP
I'LL SHOW HIM!
Re: Re: Idiot
Reply
Send
BEEP
BEEP
Re: Re: Re: Idiot
Send
BEEP
BEEP
I'M NOT GIVING UP!
Re: Re: Re
Reply
Return Battle
Akai-sensei
The idiot
. is you
That jerk
HERE COMES ANOTHER ONE
BEEP
All right, all right.
BRRRR
Akai-sensei
Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Re: Idiot
I miss you.

OH, SO THAT'S WHY YOU RAN ALL THE WAY HERE. I'M TOUCHED! ♫
BUT, MY ROOM'S NOT IN THE BEST CONDITION...
MAYBE SOMEWHERE ELSE?
ARE YOU SAYING THAT BECAUSE ALL YOUR STUFF'S PACKED AWAY!?
HUH?
OR BECAUSE IT'S TOTALLY EMPTY!?
OKAY, THEN.
LET'S GO TO THE BEACH.
I THINK THERE'RE ALSO BEACHES IN CHINA
THERE ARE BEACHES, BUT...

HA HA HA.
HOW CUTE.
YOU'RE OUT OF BREATH.
AND SO WILL SENSEI.
huff
huff
huff
huff
WHAT ARE YOU...
...LAUGHING ABOUT?
SLAM
OH.
CAN WE GO TO YOUR ROOM NOW!?
SENSEI!
huff
huff

...YUP.
IT'S PITCH-BLACK!
THE SKY AND THE OCEAN!
TODA-SAN
I JUST...
I WASN'T GOING TO LEAVE WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING

ALL RIGHT
SO, YOU KNEW?
AH.
THERE ARE NONE..
GET IN.
I'M NOT SURPRISED
...WHERE I'M GOING.
...TO THE OCEAN?
READY TO GO...

YOU'RE GOING TO GO STUDY ABROAD IN CHINA.
LIKE NOW.
I THINK I'VE FOR-GOTTEN...
...JUST WHICH OF THESE LIVES IS REAL.
...I CAN'T BE WITH YOU ANYMORE, SENSEI.
YOU'RE FOLLOW-ING YOUR DREAM
THAT'S WHY..

I DIDN'T MEAN YOU!
NO, WAIT!
HOW CRUEL!
...FORGOT.
WHAT!?
I FORGOT THAT I'D BE GONE WHEN I WENT TO STUDY ABROAD.
AT FIRST, I WAS JUST KILLING TIME UNTIL I LEAVE.
...HOW NICE IT'D BE...
I STARTED THINKING...
BEFORE I KNEW IT, IT WASN'T LIKE THAT ANYMORE.
...HAVING YOU WITH ME EVERYDAY.
...TO CONTINUE ON THIS WAY...

WHOA!
OF COURSE, I DON'T MEAN THAT!
DON'T YOU GET IT?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING...
...SENSEI?
HOW MUCH YOU'VE SAVED ME?
...NICE YOU'VE BEEN TO ME?
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND JUST HOW...
STUPID SENSEI!
I'M SO SORRY
MY TOWN DOESN'T HAVE A BEACH NEAR IT.
YES, YES
IT'D BEEN AGES SINCE I'D LAST HEARD THE SOUND OF THE WAVES
AH.
THAT'S TRUE
IF YOU LEAVE, I'LL GO BACK TO BEING A CONFUSED AND LONELY KID!
YOU SAVED ME, SENSEI!

HERE I WAS WONDERING WHAT I'D DO IF YOU BROKE DOWN CRYING AND BEGGED ME NOT TO GO.
HEY! WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
HA HA HA!
OF COURSE I WOULDN'T DO SOMETHING SO CHILDISH! GET REAL!
WHAT AM I, A KID?
TURN
I'LL FORGET ALL ABOUT YOU BEFORE THE MONTH'S UP!
I'LL KEEP LIVING STRONG EVEN AFTER YOU'VE GONE!
BESIDES, IT'S ALREADY SETTLED THAT YOU'RE GOING, AND THAT'S FINAL!
YOU SHOULD DO THAT
YEAH.

THERE ARE TRUCKLOADS OF MARRIED COUPLES WITH AN EIGHT-YEAR AGE DIFFERENCE.
THAT'S A PRETTY BIG AGE GAP!
HOW OLD..
...WILL YOU BE TURNING?
SEVEN-TEEN.
SO YOUNG
HOW ABOUT YOU, SENSEI?
I'LL BE TWENTY-FIVE NEXT MONTH.
YES, I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT.
YEAH, BUT WE'RE NOT A MARRIED COUPLE.
...COULD BE SO QUIET.
I NEVER KNEW THE OCEAN THAT ECHOED OUR TALK..
...COULD SOUND SO MUCH LIKE SOMEONE'S BREATHING.
SENSEI.
I NEVER KNEW ITS WAVES...
I LIKE THE ONES THAT FLOW. THE ONES THAT FEEL... DELICATE.
I DON'T LIKE THOSE RUGGED CHINESE CHARACTERS YOU LIKE SO MUCH.
THEY'RE PRETTY EXPENSIVE, LET ME WARN YOU.
I WANT THE CHARACTERS YOU'VE WRITTEN
I'LL SETTLE FOR THE PRACTICE ONES YOU THREW OUT.
THIS MONTH'S MY BIRTH-DAY.
SO COULD YOU GIVE ME ONE...
...AS A PRESENT?
WOW. WHAT A WEIRD TOPIC.
WHAT DO YOU PLAN ON DOING?
It's like we're [illegible] other
NOTHING CAN HAPPEN, EVEN IF YOU LOVE ME.
YOU'D UNDERSTAND IF YOU PUT SOME THOUGHT INTO IT.

BUT I'LL SETTLE FOR...
...TAKING YOUR HEART.
SO MUCH SO...
...THAT THE PAIN COULD KILL ME.
I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO FORGET YOU.
I ALWAYS...
SENSEI...
YOU'RE SO PRECIOUS.
SO, FORGET ME.
YOU CAN REST ASSURED I'LL BRING IT WITH ME WHEN I GO.
AND BE SAFE.

I KNEW FROM THE START...
...THAT I COULD NEVER TAKE YOU WITH ME.
...USING FORCE
...WHO SAID YOU'D STEAL ME AWAY OR SOMETHING..
YEAH, BUT SENSEI, YOU'RE THE ONE ..
THAT'S RIGHT.

HAVE A SAFE FLIGHT WHEREVER YOU'RE GOING!
I WONDER IF IT'S HEADED TO CHINA.
JAPAN'S TOO SMALL FOR YOU!
THAT AIRPLANE...
CREAK

THE ELEVENTH OF THE MONTH WAS A BRIGHT AND SUNNY DAY.
...WANTED TO BE WITH YOU.
IT WAS THE DAY SENSEI FLEW OFF TOWARDS THE EAST.
I WAS SO HAPPY.

NO WAY! SENSEI DREW THIS? IT DOESN'T MATCH HIM AT ALL!
WELL, I DID ASK FOR THEM...
HA HA HA
...LIKE THIS.
IT MAKES ME WANT TO TRACE THEM...
COME BACK AGAIN.
GOOD GIRL. GOOD GIRL.

IT'S TOO PRETTY.
NOW...
...THERE'S NOTHING LEFT.
PLEASE, DISAPPEAR PRETTILY.
SENSEI...

THE PAIN COULD KILL ME...
...I'VE ONLY HAD ONE...
TO ME...
...CUTE GIRL.

IT HURTS ME JUST LOOKING AT YOU.
YOU'VE IMMUNIZED YOURSELF...
...AGAINST PAINFUL AND BAD THINGS
HELP ME, SENSEI.

I was SO HAPPY.
...WANTED TO BE WITH YOU.
I ALWAYS...

...WERE NEVER RETURNED.

I'M THE ONE WHO WAS SAD.
BUT I COULDN'T EXPRESS IT WELL.
I COULD ONLY LASSO MY FEELINGS AND GET THEM DOWN ON PAPER.
I WROTE A LETTER EVERYDAY.
"NATSU, HOW ARE YOU?"
"NOTHING SAD HAPPEN?"
I COULDN'T SPEAK.
I COULDN'T FORM ANY WORDS.
I KNEW I'D FELT THIS FEELING ONCE BEFORE.
MY FEELINGS...
NO REPLY CAME.

#33 Light
L A
THAT DAY, I RECEIVED..
...A SINGLE LETTER FROM NATSU.
From Natsu Toda

You might think it strange to send a letter when we live in the same house, but...

...because we kept in touch this way long ago, I'm writing this letter now.

Soon it will be one year since we started living together here at home.

I still remember perfectly...

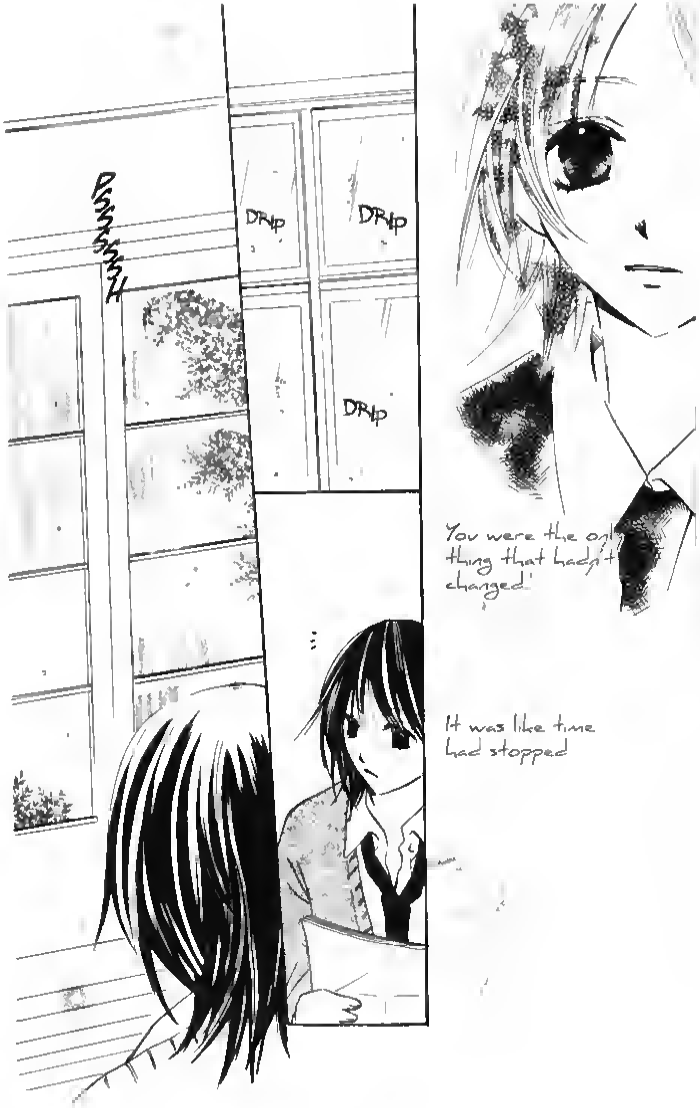
BONUS.

About Missing and "Light"

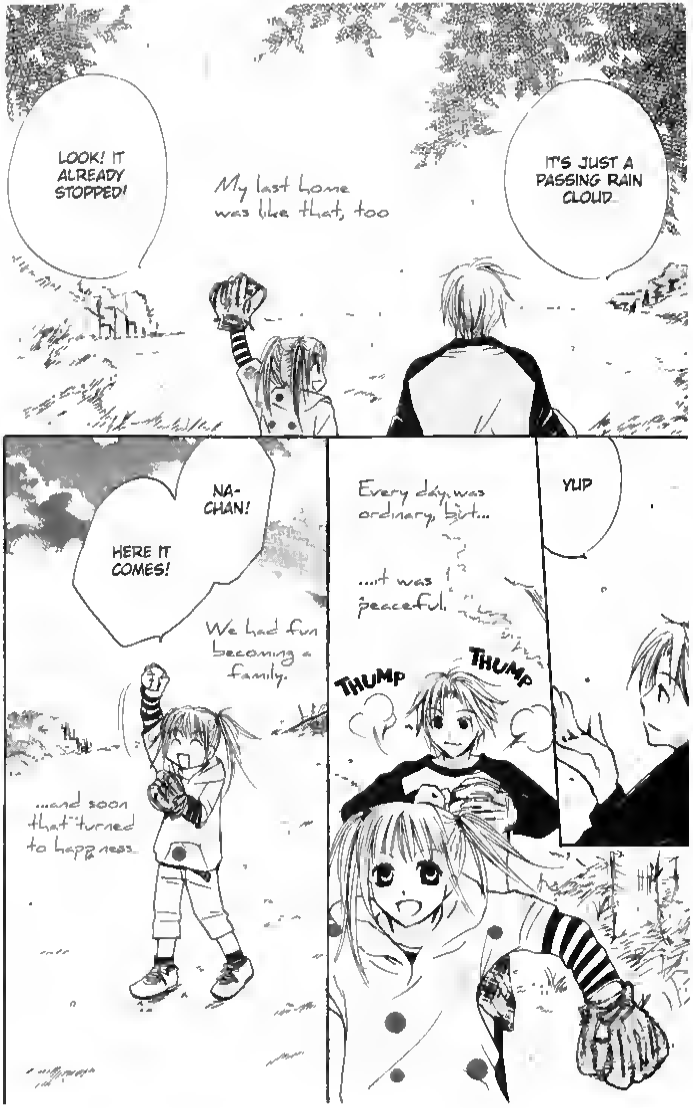
I'd always intended these two stories to be the essence of the crossroad ending. Especially in the chapter titled "Light" where I've worked so hard to compose the built-up feelings of these past three years of serialization. It was tough because the first draft wasn't well organized. Ha ha. I'm just glad that it came out well in the end. I usually cry when I write manga but this series didn't have nearly as many tears. Ha ha. I also had very little "light" when I first started, but now before I knew it, it's grown so large and I find myself here. I thought a lot about that as I wrote this.

It was raining that day.
And the door fit just a little worse than it used to.
It was just a little colder..
...than it had been in Tokyo
The floors creaked with age when I stepped on them.
And there...
...you were

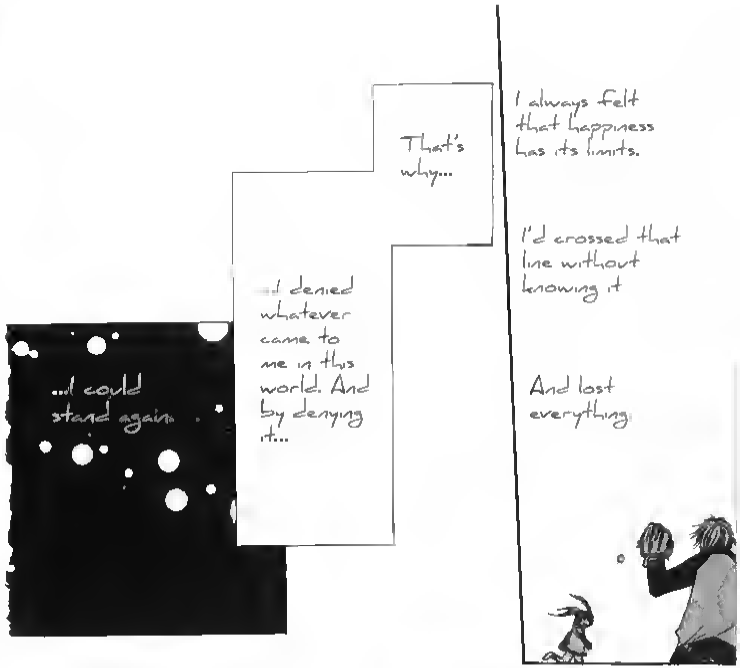
Sometimes...
...it scared me.
One year has passed since then.
Our new life started out awkward, but soon it seemed normal. Things were comfortable

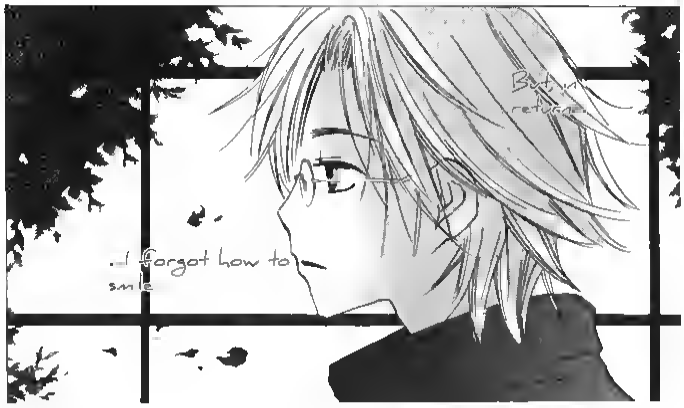

PSSSSH
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
You were the only thing that hadn't changed.
It was like time had stopped

ALL RIGHT! I'M READY FOR IT!
...up until...
And it did go on that way..
I thought it would last forever
...you stopped writing.


LOOK! IT ALREADY STOPPED!
My last home was like that, too
IT'S JUST A PASSING RAIN CLOUD
NA-CHAN!
HERE IT COMES!
We had fun becoming a family.
...and soon that turned to happiness
Every day was ordinary, but...
...it was peaceful.
YUP
THUMP
THUMP

NA-CHAN, LOOK!
THE SUNSET!
SUNSETS ARE ALWAYS PRETTY AFTER IT RAINS.
YEAH.
I couldn't even...
...cry.
I also forgot how to get angry. My heart was broken.
I felt nothing but emptiness.


I always felt that happiness has its limits.
I'd crossed that line without knowing it
And lost everything.
That's why...
...I denied whatever came to me in this world. And by denying it...
...I could stand again.


...I forgot how to smile.
But it returned.

...I wouldn't care if it disappeared.
I thought it would be...
...so much easier...
But all of a sudden...
...if I disappeared, too.
...gone on like that...

BONK
YOWCH!
IT'S BEAUTIFUL.
NYA HA HA HA! ♫
SATSUKI, YOU SNEAK!
If the world had really...
HEE HEE HEE HEE! ♫
ARGH! NOW IT'S ROLLING AWAY!

It was raining that day

The town had changed, but I found my way straight to the house.

MAP

But I wasn't hurrying...

...because of the rain.

...because of the rain.

I wasn't running...

And before I knew it, I was standing here in this town.

LONG TIME, NO HEAR!

GRANDMA?

...the tiny light...

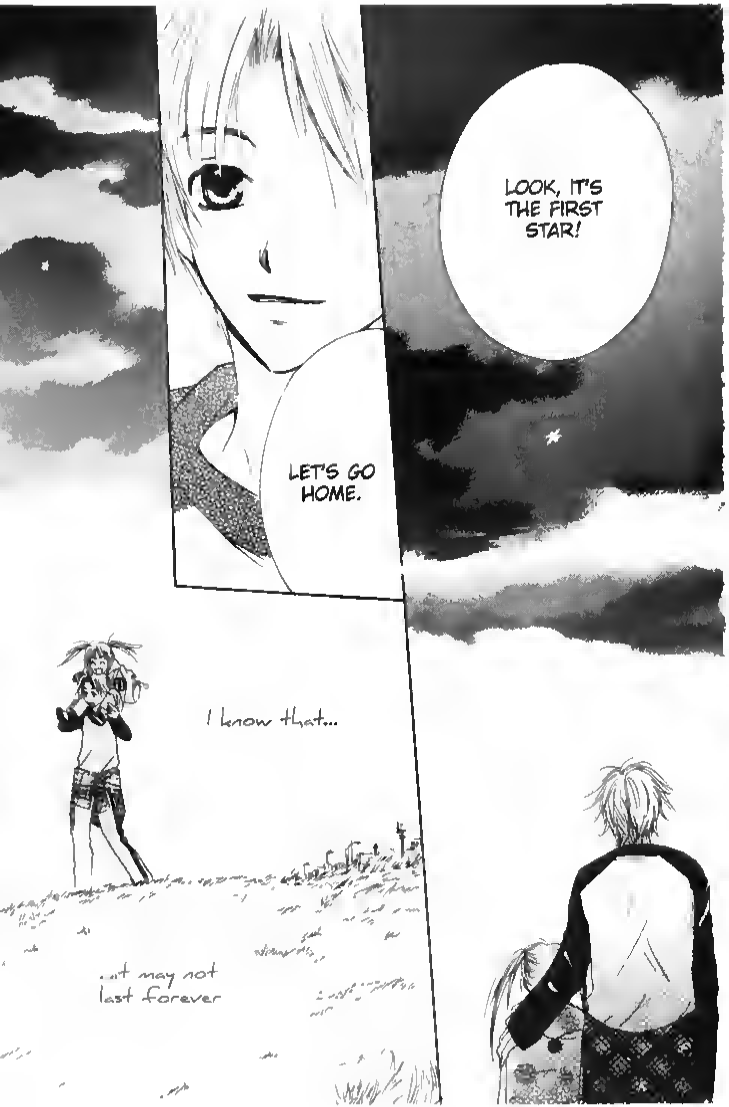
...that was left in my heart...

IT'S NATSU.

...began to shine the smallest bit.

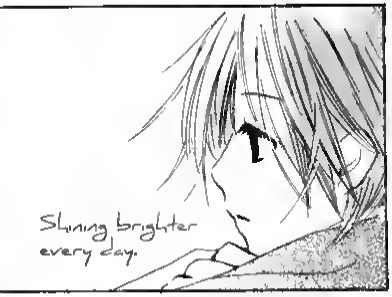
FOR EIGHT YEARS...
..I'VE BEEN WAITING
FOR NATSU
MY LIGHT IS...NATSU.
JUST SEEING NATSU..
..AGAIN WAS..
GOT IT!
...MY SMALL LIGHT.
ALL RIGHT!

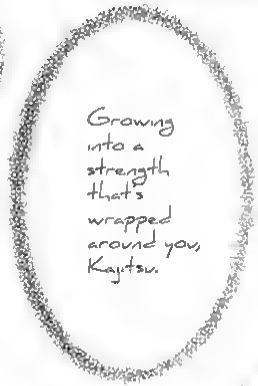
LIGHT...
..I knew what the small light was...
..that had moved me.


LOOK, IT'S THE FIRST STAR!
LET'S GO HOME.
I know that...
...it may not last forever

Pass it! Pass it!
Let's go!
SATSUKI CAN SEE! SATSUKI CAN SEE!
IT'S GETTING DARK WE WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE THE BALL ANYMORE
SEE, YOU CAN'T EVEN CATCH IT.
BONK
TOSS
HA HA HA HA
C'MON! JUST A LITTLE MORE!
SATSUKI!!

It started off that way, but...
...it's growing slowly but surely in my heart


Shining brighter every day.


Growing into a strength that's wrapped around you, Kaitsu.

It's okay...
...if it's small.

It's only a tiny thing...
..that could simply disappear.
There's no guarantee
But...
...that's okay.

The very fact of your existence...

...is the light that keeps me living.

...gives me strength...

...that nothing can replace.

My feelings for you...

...are my strength to live.

The fact that you're alive, Kajitsu...

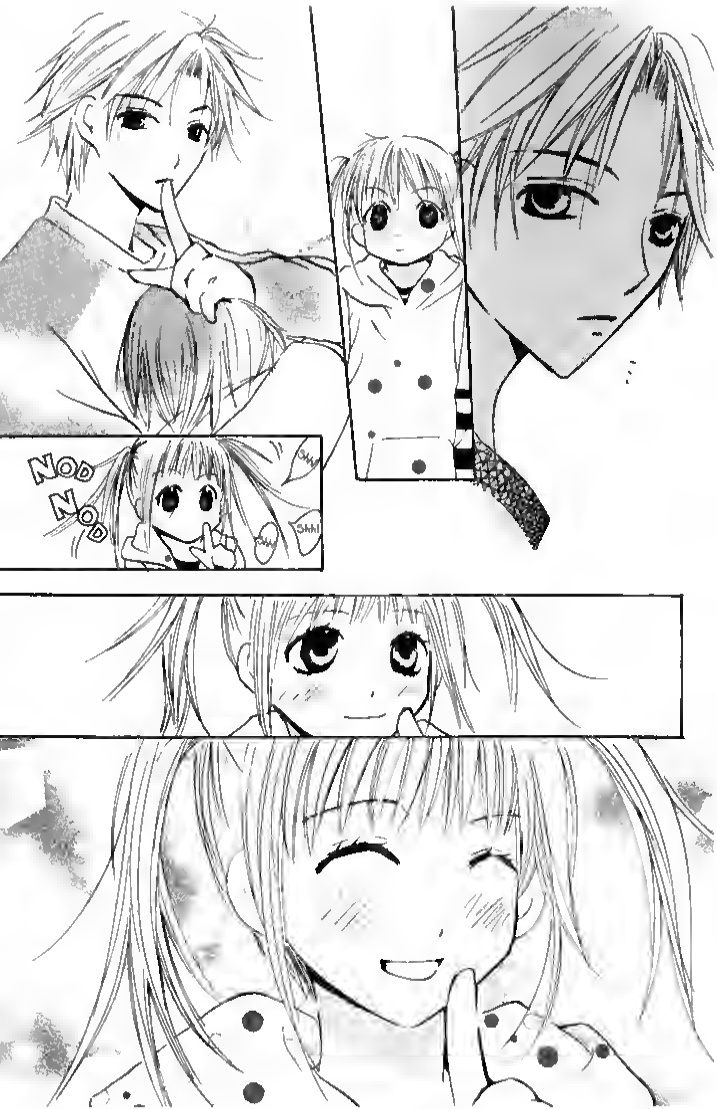
I DON'T, EITHER.
THE "START," HUH?
I CAN'T IMAGINE IT WAS BECAUSE I'VE ALWAYS BEEN AWARE OF MAKING DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN OTHER PEOPLE.
NO, IT COULDN'T BE. THEN, WHAT ON EARTH WAS IT?
BOO, BOO
I DON'T GET IT!
I DON'T GET IT AT ALL!
SUPER BOOING!
BUT I DO KNOW THAT...
...TOMORROW MORE THAN TODAY. AND NEXT YEAR MORE THAN TOMORROW...
...MORE THAN EVER...
...I'LL LOVE HER.

WHAT KIND OF QUESTION IS THAT?
THIS IS WHY I CAN'T STAND LITTLE KIDS.
C'MON! TELL ME!
Being young, you're still a woman, huh Satsuki?
...LOVING ONEE-CHAN?
WHEN DID YOU START...
...WHEN IT WAS.
I WONDER...
NOTHING SPECIAL HAPPENED.
I CAN'T THINK OF THE MOMENT IT FIRST STARTED.
IT'S JUST...

BUT NOW...
...I...
...AM AFRAID TO CRY MORE THAN EVER.
GRANDMA.
...until I see you again.
I KNOW YOU WERE THE ONE WHO LET ME SEE HIM
YOU LET ME SEE...
...ALL THE ONES I LOVE—THE FAMILY AND NATSU...
...WITHOUT CRYING.
HA HA HA! GUILTY AS CHARGED!
THAT'S CALLED MAKING A MUSHY SPEECH!
SATSUKI KNOWS!
GIVE IT A REST.
MUSHY, MUSHY, MUSHY, MUSHY!
You're more like Ruriko everyday.
That's why, Kajitsu...
...I thank you for waiting for me...
AND THAT'S ALL I NEED TO KNOW.
I'LL LOVE HER DEARLY

WE'RE HOME.
...and because it's so small...
And because nothing lasts forever...
WELCOME BACK.
YOU KNOW WHAT SATSUKI DID?
SATSUKI PLAYED CATCH WITH NA-CHAN!
I'M GONNA THROW JUST ONE MORE!
WATCH ME!
SHE JUST WON'T GIVE UP...
STOMP STOMP STOMP
I READ YOUR LETTER
ER, I'LL PASS ON ANY COMMENTS YOU HAVE.
IT TOOK A REALLY LONG TIME TO WRITE
DON'T SAY ANYTHING. IT'S TOO EMBARRASS-ING.
AHEM

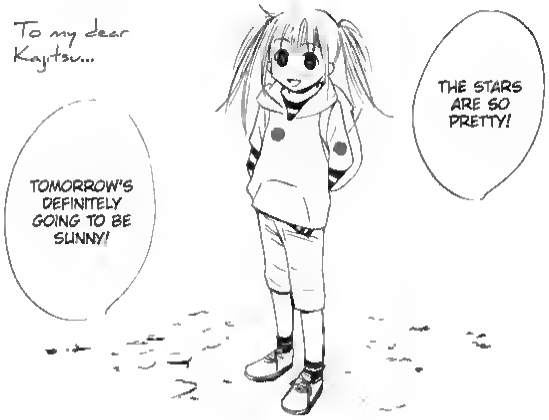
OH!
IT'S ONEE-CHAN!
I CAN CRY BECAUSE I TRUST SOMEONE.
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT, RIGHT?


NOD
NOD
Shh!

I'M GONNA THROW IT!
Let's live with care.
...let's live that way
And then...
...we'll always be together.

OKAY, SATSUKI'S GOING IN AHEAD.
WOW!

My letter ends here

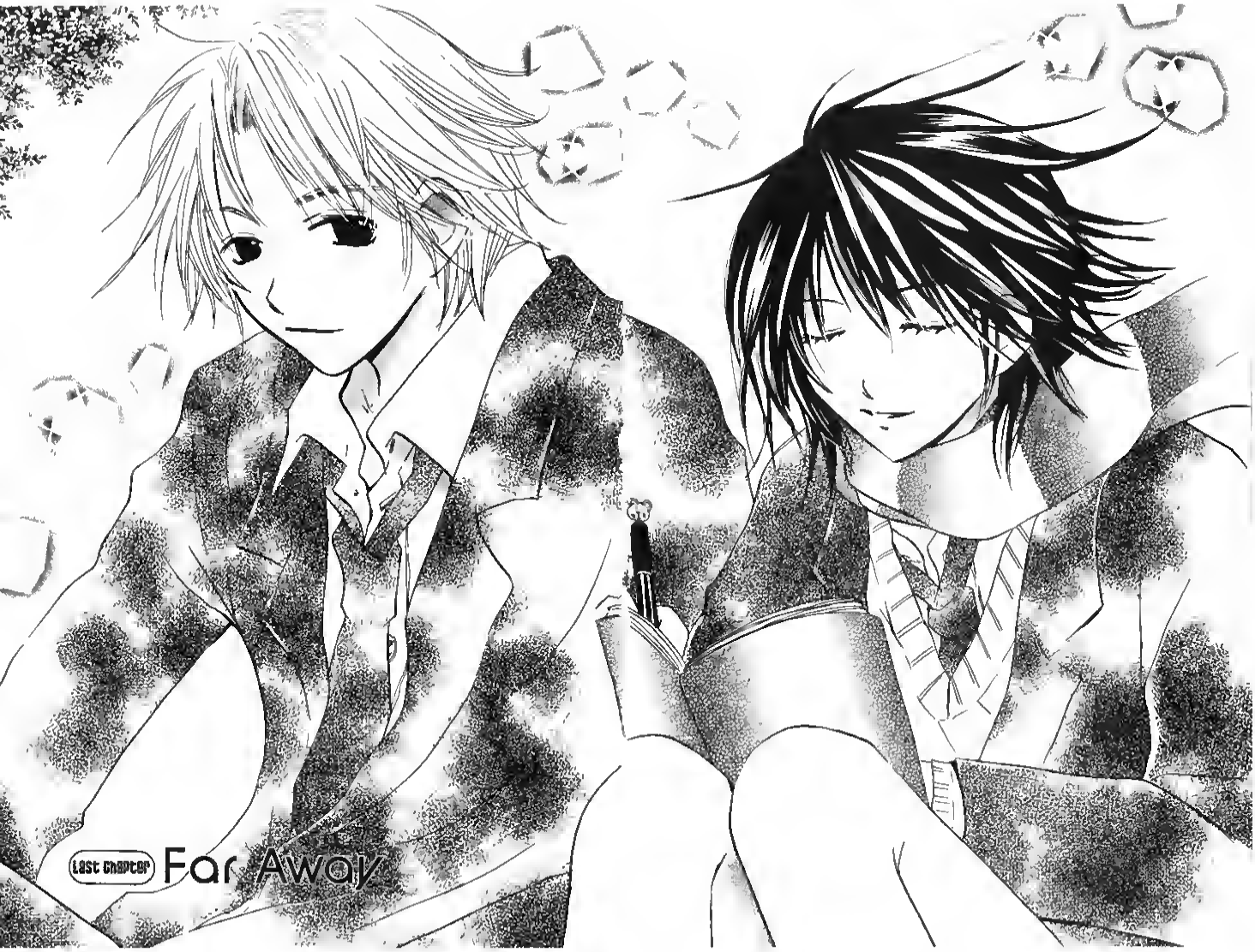

To my dear Kaitsu...
TOMORROW'S DEFINITELY GOING TO BE SUNNY!
THE STARS ARE SO PRETTY!

But by then...
...let's write a lot more about the two of us.
Let's write another one sometime.

Last Chapter "Far Away"
TODAY BEGINS...
SMACK
BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP
Beep beep
YAAWN.....
...ANOTHER FIRST DAY OF THE MONTH.

HEY! LOOK AT THAT!
THEY'RE SHINING!

...with love.


Last chapter
Far Away

YOU'RE UP EARLY, NATSU.
WOBBLE
YOU PULL ANOTHER ALL-NIGHTER STUDYING?
INSOMNIA.
NO, JUST THE USUAL
YOU GONNA BE OKAY?
MORNING.
WAVE WAVE
I'LL BE FINE.
...HELP ME GET TO SLEEP, BUT...
...MIGHT...
I THOUGHT A GLASS OF MILK...
FOUR BOTTLES? YOU DRANK THEM ALL!
Heh heh.
...DRINKING THEM FIRST THING IN THE MORNING WASN'T GOING TO HELP
.. IT TOOK ME FOUR BOTTLES TO REALIZE...

ALL RIGHTY THEN!
OKAY!
TIME TO FACE THE DAY WITH VIGOR!
REBEL YELL
CLINK

WHAT A STRONG WIND!
I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE!
Just look at my inbox!
..FIFTEEN TIMES IN ONE DAY, TELLING ME TO INVITE HER OUT FOR DINNER!
SHE'S BEEN CALLING ME...
Fifteen times!?
AHEM
GUESS THAT PROVES HOW CHARMING I AM.
I UNDERSTAND JUST HOW SHE FEELS!
SHE'S A PROMISING WOMAN!
DA--
ONII-CHAN, DO YOU HAVE A DATE WITH ERICA?
NOTHING THAT SERIOUS!
IT'S JUST THAT SHE, WELL...
I WANT TO CONGRATULATE YOU, SO I DON'T THINK YOU KNOW, BUT...
JUST KIDDING.
ERK!
ONII-CHAN, YOUR NOSE HAIR'S SHOWING
GRAB
X-
you...
little!

GOOD GRIEF.
TOTALLY HELPLESS.
THUMP
HEY, ONII-CHAN! I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO QUIT BRINGING THE NEWSPAPER INTO THE BATHROOM!
THUMP
ALL RIGHT.
I'M EATING DINNER OUT TODAY, SO DON'T MAKE ANY FOR ME.
YUP!
HAVE A NICE DAY AT WORK.
RATTLE
GUST
OH!

Bonus*

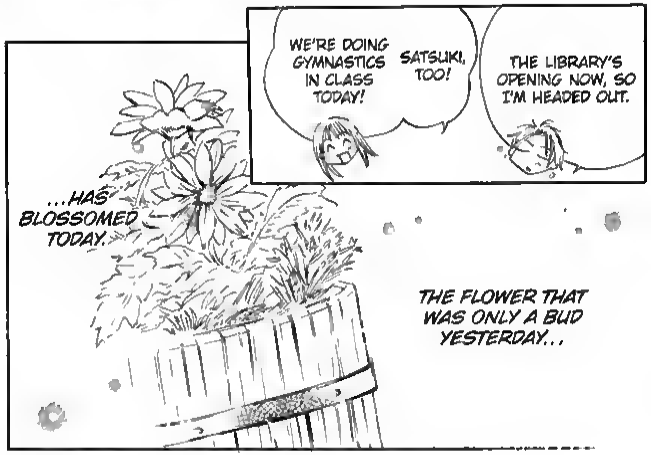
Between writing the chapters before this one and this final chapter my beloved pet dog, who was the source behind the "mi" name died at sixteen years of age. I nursed him up until the very end, so I like to think that he wasn't lonely. He was very important to me, and I was important to him, as well. Because he had my back the whole time I was able to push on to this new world. He gave me so many things that enabled me to live now. And he died for me. I now live on after accepting his life ☆

SO YOU BETTER KEEP YOUR GUARD UP, OR YOU'RE GONNA GET HURT.
...POPULAR (WHEN SHE KEEPS HER MOUTH SHUT.)
...ERICA IS INCREDIBLY...
PFF!
...I'LL ALWAYS BE YOUR BELOVED BIG BROTHER. DON'T YOU WORRY. ♡
NO MATTER WHAT GIRL COMES ALONG...
HA HA HA HA HA! ♫
OH YOU! ARE YOU FEELING A LITTLE JEALOUS, NOW THAT YOU'RE BIG BROTHER'S BEEN TAKEN? ♡ ♡
AAH.
BUSY, BUSY, BUSY.
TUMBLE
OW!
I'M OFF!
LOVE YOU!
SMOOCH
LITTLE SIS!
OH, GO TRIP AND FALL ON A ROCK!

NOOO! QUIT BULLYING ME, ONEE-CHAN!
I HATE YOU!
WAAAH! WAAAH!
IF YOU KEEP WHINING, I'LL THROW YOU IN THERE, TOO! AND THAT THING SPINS SO FAST, YOUR EYES'LL START SPINNING AND YOU'LL FEEL SICK!
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?
WELL, ARE YOU GOING TO WEAR WET ONES, THEN?
NOOO!
LOOK, SATSUKI, QUIT BEING A BABY ABOUT THIS!
NOOOO!
CAN'T YOU EVEN LOOK AFTER A LITTLE KID PROPERLY?
WHY'D YOU MAKE HER CRY?
AAAAH, KEEP IT DOWN, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!
BUT, EVERYDAY..
Yeah, stop it.
And stop calling Satsuki a baby.
YOU'RE THE LAST PERSON TO TELL ME THAT!

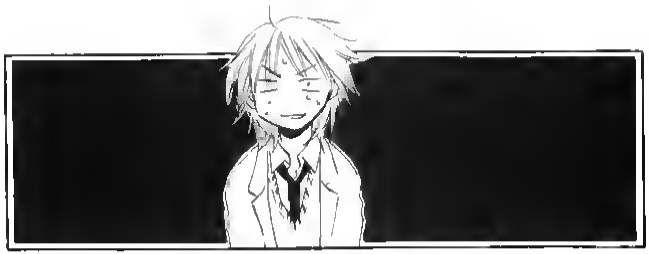
IF YOU MEAN THE ONES WITH STARS ON THEM, YOU PUT THOSE AWAY YOURSELF, REMEMBER?
NO! THE SHINY ONES WITH THE PINK AND RED!
PINK?
STOMP
SATSUKI LOST HER PINK SOCKS!
THE ONES THAT GO UP TO MY KNEES!
STOMP
STOMP
NO, NO, NO!
I WANT THOSE! THOSE! I NEED TO WEAR THOSE!
GET SOME OTHERS
YUP, SPINNING AROUND
THEN THOSE ARE IN THE WASHING MACHINE RIGHT NOW

INSOMNIA, HUH?
..HAS GOTTEN MORE BIG-HEARTED.
HE'S A MAN, HE'LL FIGURE IT OUT HIM-SELF.
WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE IT'LL KILL HIM.
NATSU, TOO, WHO USED TO BLOW HIS TOP AT ANY LITTLE THING...
MUST MEAN SHE'S A NORMAL LITTLE KID.
SLURP


WE'RE DOING GYMNASTICS IN CLASS TODAY!
SATSUKI, TOO!
THE LIBRARY'S OPENING NOW, SO I'M HEADED OUT.
...HAS BLOSSOMED TODAY.
THE FLOWER THAT WAS ONLY A BUD YESTERDAY..

VERY CUTE
MM-HM
Not even looking
AREN'T THEY CUTE?
LOOK-EY!
NA-CHAN!
MORE RICE!
ONEE-CHAN!
That's what makes her a little kid
SHE'S ALREADY CHEERED UP
...EVERY-THING MAY LOOK THE SAME...
..BUT IT'S ALL CHANG-ING...
..SHE TURNS AROUND IN NO TIME.
IT'S ALMOST NORMAL TO HAVE LITTLE FIGHTS WITH SATSUKI NOW.
ALTHOUGH SHE'S DEMANDING AND I SCOLD HER..

*See translator's notes



I SHOULDN'T HAVE ASKED...
THAT WAS JUST A JOKE
HE'S ENJOYING A REGULAR CAMPUS LIFE.
EXTREMELY STOIC.
doom
THEN WHY DON'T YOU CONTACT HIM?
I KNOW IT. HE...TOLD ME.
I HEAR YOU TWO HAVEN'T KEPT IN TOUCH AT ALL.
SHALL I GIVE YOU HIS NUMBER?
ER, WELL... NOW'S NOT A GOOD TIME. I'VE DECIDED THAT...

DING DONG
I WONDER IF... SENSEI'S DOING ALL RIGHT.
AW, HE'S DOING JUST FINE!
HE'S HAVING A GREAT TIME!
HE WAS BOASTING HOW HE'S THOROUGHLY GOTTEN TO KNOW THE CHINESE WOMAN'S BODY. HE'S HAVING PLENTY OF FUN! ♡♡
DO YOU WANT TO SEE HIM?

...RIGHT, SENSEI?
YOU'LL WAIT FOR ME...
UNTIL THAT TIME COMES.
DO YOU WANT TO SEE HIM?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, TOMA-SEN-SEI!
ZOOM
BYE!
HEY!
...CON-TACTING SENSEI...
...WILL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL I'VE STEPPED THROUGH MY DREAM'S DOOR.
I'M LONESOME!
FUME
FUME
WHAT GIVES? NOW THAT AKAI'S NOT AROUND, YOU WON'T PLAY WITH ME?
...I'LL GO AND SEE SENSEI.
WHEN I HAVE REACHED MY DREAM...

HOW PAPA IS..
...REALLY AN IDIOT.
I'M NOT SAYING THAT I HAVE IT ALL, OR ANYTHING.
I KNOW I'M PRETTY ORDINARY RIGHT NOW, BUT I'M HAPPY.
PAPA REALLY WAS...
...AN IDIOT FOR...
..THROWING AWAY EVERYTHING WE HAVE NOW.

I KNOW WHERE HE IS, SO .
...WILL YOU GO GET HIM?
I DON'T REALLY WANT TO SEE HIM, I GUESS.
I WAS JUST ASKING, REALLY
I'VE JUST BEEN THINKING LATELY.
HMM.
TURN
Bluff
I'M NOT SO..
..SURE ABOUT THAT.
ER..

JUST THEN, I HAD A STRANGE FEELING.
?
I'M HOME!
HM?
THAT WOMAN!
I've gone out for a while ♡ I've gone to travel the world and collect all of your papas ♡ Sorry if I end up coming home with a new papa! ♡ Be nice to each other while I'm gone!! Bye-bye!!
Fumiko ♡
I love ♡ you!
P.S.
I borrowed some money
WE'VE BEEN HAD!

HE REALLY IS A MORON.
THAT'S SO TRUE
BY THE WAY, KAJITSU, YOU'VE CERTAINLY GROWN UP.
IF I EVER RUN INTO HIM...
...I'LL SOCK HIM IN THE FACE TWO OR THREE TIMES.
HEH HEH HEH.
PSSSSSSH
I'M RELIEVED.
EVERYONE HAS.

MOTHER.
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.
SATSUKI'S DEFINITELY ONE OF US!
IF YOU SEE PAPA SOMEWHERE OUT THERE, GIVE HIM TEN PUNCHES FOR ME.
WE'RE STRONGER THAN ADULTS MAY THINK.
WE WON'T GIVE UP!
TELL HIM THAT'S WHAT HE DESERVES!
RIGHT ON!
CLACK

NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO, SHE'LL JUST NEVER LEARN TO SETTLE DOWN.
THIS IS JUST LIKE HER.
I WAS WONDERING WHY SHE DID THE DISHES WITHOUT FUSSING ABOUT IT!
I LET MY GUARD DOWN FOR ONE MINUTE, AND SHE PULLS THIS.
DID MAMA GO AWAY AGAIN?
THADUMP
ER, N-NOT REALLY...?
SHE SAID SHE'D COME BACK SOMEDAY.
LET HER DO WHAT SHE WANTS.
BESIDES, THERE ARE DOZENS OF AIRLINES IN THE TERMINAL!
THAT'S IT! I'M GOING TO NARITA AIRPORT NOW AND STOPPING HER!
SHE DIDN'T SAY IF SHE'D BE LEAVING THE COUNTRY!
SHE'S SO STRONG!!!
SATSUKI WILL WAIT PATIENTLY FOR HER.
IT'LL BE GOOD NOT HAVING HER HANG AROUND
SIGH

SAT-SUKI..
AND ONEE-CHAN AREN'T TIED BY BLOOD, RIGHT?
Pheeeew..
Gargle
Gargle
PTOOIE
SWISH
SWISH
THAT'S BECAUSE WE'RE FAMILY.
MY FRIENDS SAY THAT ALL THE TIME!
BUT SATSUKI AND ONEE-CHAN LOOK A LOT ALIKE!
NOPE, WE'RE NOT
AND SAT-SUKI...
WE'RE ALL TIED TOGETHER.
YOU LOOK LIKE ONII-CHAN AND NATSU, TOO.
AND NOT JUST US

THE FUTURE IS...
...ALREADY OURS.
BRUSH
BRUSH
BRUSH

...WHO MAKES EVERYONE AROUND HER SHINE
...THE KIND OF WOMAN...
SO YOU SEE, SATSUKI...
...IT'S NOT JUST FOR US.
10
WEST
SOUTH
TRY TO GROW UP TO BE ..
Ooh!
ROGER!

WHAT'S A "SIGNPOST"?
?
WE CAN GO FORWARD WITHOUT GETTING LOST.
...WE CAN TRUST THAT WE'RE ALL RIGHT.
...YOU'RE OUR SIGN-POST BECAUSE YOU'RE SO BRIGHT AND HAPPY..
IT'S THIS THING!

HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO TAKE? WE'RE GONNA BE LATE!
SATSUKI-CHAN!
Pfeeeh!..
Gargle Gargle
swish swish PTOOIE
DIDN'T I TELL YOU WE HAVE A PHOTO SHOOT BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS?
WE'RE LOSING TIME!
MANAGER!
IF WE DON'T GET THERE EARLY, WE'LL MAKE A BAD IMPRESSION! PLEASE, SATSUKI-CHAN!
IF I DON'T EAT BREAKFAST, I'LL GET FAT.
THERE'S NO TIME FOR THAT!
SATSUKI WILL HAVE HER BREAKFAST FIRST, SO WAIT.
QUIT...
...PANICKING!

Toda
POKE
POKE
Hm.

YOUNG-STERS GOTTA SHOW OFF!
BUT SHE'S CUTE, SO WHAT'S THE HARM?
ONII-CHAN WON'T ALLOW THIS!
WHAT'S WITH THE BATHING SUIT?
SATSUKI'S ONLY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL!!
satsuki's way
won't I forgive those nasty UV rays!
UV CUT
PROTECT
new product!
SONNY

NATSU GRADUATED FROM TOKYO UNIVERSITY WITH FLYING COLORS, AND NOW HE'S AN ENGINEER IN A COMPANY'S RESEARCH DEPARTMENT.
RATTLE
NATSU! TIME TO GET UP!
WAKE UP!
EVERYDAY IS NOTHING SHORT OF AN UPROAR
DUE TO THIS AND THAT, THE TODA HOUSEHOLD HAS TURNED INTO A BOARDING HOUSE OF SORTS.

WORK STARTS IN THE AFTERNOON TODAY
BUT THIS HASN'T CHANGED AT ALL.

SATSUKI REALLY DID END UP SELLING DREAMS TO A LOT OF PEOPLE. SINCE BECOMING AN IDOL, TOKIHITO-KUN AND MANO-CHAN ACT AS HER MANGERS AND LIVE IN THE SAME HOUSE.
IT'S BEEN SIX YEARS.
I SWEAR I'LL THROW THOSE TWO OUT IF THEY DON'T START GETTING ALONG
OH!
MUNCH
MUNCH
SMACK
MELT
OOOH, SHE'S SO COOL AND TOUGH TODAY, TOO! ♡
Y-YES, MA'AM!
SATSUKI-CHAAAN! ♡
HITO-KUN?
ACK! MANO-CHAN! I'M SO SORRY!

LOOK AT THE TV, GUYS!
WE ALSO OWN ONE DOG.
...REALLY DID FOLLOW ONII-CHAN AND BECAME HIS WIFE AFTER GRADUATING FROM COLLEGE.
HMM?
IT'S SATSUKI'S NEWEST COMMERCIAL!
ERICA, WHO'D SAID, "I'LL FOLLOW YOU!"...

AFTER THE FIRST VOLUME SOLD PRETTY WELL, I TOOK AWHILE TO WRITE SEQUELS.

Sequel

BUT...

AFTER NUMEROUS REJECTIONS, THE ONE WORK I THOUGHT TO MYSELF, "IF THIS ONE DOESN'T MAKE IT, I'M GIVING UP FOR GOOD" BECAME MY DEBUT.

THE TITLE WAS "THE SHARK BELLY CLUB."

A GROUP OF YOUNG GIRLS AND BOYS ARE SWALLOWED BY A SHARK, AND COME OUT REBORN. THEY DEVELOP SUPER POWERS AND GO ON ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES. IT WAS A SCIENCE-FICTION/FANTASY SET IN THE NEAR FUTURE. TO TOP IT OFF, THE AD ON THE BOOK COVER SAID, "THIS GIRL'S BAD NEWS!!"

WHAT A HORRIBLE AD.

The Shark Belly Club

MY GAWD!

IT'S JUST SOOOO BORING!

...THAT ONE GUY ALWAYS GAVE ME BAD REVIEWS.

AT OUR WEDDING, I MET SUBARU'S FAMILY. THEY WERE ALL VERY NICE PEOPLE.

YOU DEMON!

HAHA!

FLAP

HURRY IT UP!

FLAP FLAP

SWIPE

EEK!

IF YOU DON'T GET UP NOW, I CAN'T CLEAN UP IN HERE!

Wah!

SOON AFTER, WE RECEIVED A PUPPY THAT WAS BORN AT SUBARU'S HOUSE.

...TWO YEARS AGO, I FINALLY BECAME THE NOVELIST I WANTED TO BE...

AND AS FOR ME...

I've now completed 20 works!

NOW, SUBARU COMES OVER OFTEN TO CHECK ON HOW THE DOG'S DOING.

WELCOME BACK.
...THIS IS THE ONLY TIME I CAN GET AN HONEST RESPONSE FROM HIM.
SENSEI?
BUT FOR SOMEONE SO UNWILLING TO TALK ON THE PHONE...
I'M HOME.
I THINK IT'LL ALWAYS BE LIKE THIS BETWEEN US.
ARE YOU CHEATING?
Toda-san.
NO, I AM NOT!

WHEN DID YOU GET BACK TO JAPAN?
I SEE YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED MUCH, SENSEI.
TWO DAYS AGO.
I'LL BE LEAVING AGAIN SOON THOUGH, SO I DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.
...JUST HOW MUCH I WANT TO KNOCK YOU AROUND AND KILL YOU.
READING IT REMINDS ME...
QUIT GOING BACK TO CHINA ALL THE TIME HOW SHAMELESS CAN YOU BE?
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
YUP JAPAN'S SO MUCH MORE RELAXED.
IS THAT WHY INSTEAD OF SEEING YOUR PARENTS, YOU'RE CRASHING AT TOMA-SENSEI'S PLACE?
I'M PRETTY LOUD ABOUT IT.
NOWADAYS, SENSEI LIVES MOST OF HIS DAYS IN CHINA.
WHEN HE OCCASIONALLY COMES BACK, HE GIVES ME A CALL. BECAUSE I NAG HIM TO KEEP IN TOUCH!

..TO BE LIKE ONEE-CHAN SOMEDAY!
?
AND SATSUKI WANTS...
I THINK THAT..
..ONEE-CHAN IS OUR SIGNPOST.
...BUT ARE NOW CONNECTED.
WE CAME FROM SO MANY DIFFERENT PLACES...

...THE FIRST TIME WE WERE ALL TOGETHER HERE.
...GRANDMA USED TO DO THE SAME THING...
BOOM
GET IT TOGETHER AND GO!
OKAY, EVERY-ONE!
WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT...
ALL RIGHT!
murmur
murmur
WE'RE OFF!
HA HA
CHATTER
CHATTER
NUDGE
YOU, TOO, SATSUKI! OFF YOU GO!

SATSUKI-CHAAAAN! SEIZE THE DAY!
I'll bring around the car!
...AND BECOME THE TYPE OF PERSON WHO CAN WALK ON...
...WITH YOUR OWN STRENGTH.
OOOOKAY!

SATSUKI!
WE'RE FACING THE FUTURE.
I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOUR SMILE, SATSUKI!
KEEP IT UP!
NO MATTER WHAT COMES BY LATER ..
...DON'T EVER GO LOOKING FOR SADNESS AND DESPAIR.
GO FORTH ON THE PATH YOU BELIEVE IN...

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Fin.

crossroad

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